

Earlier this year, I found [a clip](#) making the rounds of Slipknot talking about the health of the Japanese heavy music scene. The clip was recorded in 2016, and in it, several of the masked men refer to Japanese noise legend Masonna, who opened for them on their first tour of the island in 2000. They wax poetic about his one minute fifteen second sets, where he had no instruments, instead choosing to distort and contort his voice... “it was like Merzbow and stuff,” according to the band.

In a twist of ironic fate, months later I find myself writing a review of the self-titled Grimhopper EP, recorded in 2006. Why ironic, you might be asking? Well, just like the identities of those 9 jumpsuited masked men, Grimhopper is also a performer of great mystery. Over these four tracks, I found myself with more questions than answers: who is Grimhopper? What pedigree do they have as a musician that enables them to similarly turn a minimalist setup into such complex blasts of harsh surrealism “like Merzbow and stuff”? The similarities were striking: Grimhopper recorded this in the summer of 2006, but it didn’t come out until February 2016. 9 years. 9 members of Slipknot, who had Masonna open their tour of Japan, the same Masonna who is clearly an influence on this project. If not Masonna himself, this album certainly calls back to the harsh noise scene in Japan, “like Merzbow and stuff.”

A Google search provided nothing. I can deal with not knowing who makes the art, but I have to know the reason why; the mystery of the artist is negotiable, while the art needs to be contextualized before the consumer can put their own interpretation on it. Then, as if sent to me by the Gods, Slipknot dropped a new record in 2022. The album itself is fine, but the first single is simply titled, “Yen.” You know, Yen, as in the Japanese currency? Yes! Japan, the country that introduced the 9 men of Slipknot to Japanese extreme harsh noise, like Masonna, and “like Merzbow and stuff.”

I don’t believe in coincidence, I firmly believe that there is an interconnectedness between all things. There were too many different things converging throughout the course of these 51 seconds of sonic blasts for it to simply exist on its own, untethered to an established artist with surely thousands of dollars in recording equipment and a deep tie to a tradition of experimentation that can be traced back to “like Merzbow and stuff.”

I’ve gathered my evidence, looked at the facts, crossed my ts and dotted my eyes, and here it is: I am postulating that it is a member of the band Slipknot that wrote this work of postmodern noise. The anthemic pummeling of “Before I Forget” seems to be a spiritual descendant of a song this mystery member wrote years before, simply titled “Snow.” At the same time, it’s not hard to see the similarities in structure between “Worshipping The Necrowizard on a Warm Summer Day” and the radio hit “Wait and Bleed.” Though I can rule out several members of The ‘Knot based on the timbre of the vocals, I think this wonderful piece of noise was created most likely by #5, Craig. The one profiled in a BBC article about celebrating the quiet member of a band, where it was mentioned that he said in an interview that if he wasn’t in Slipknot he’d probably be killing people, earning him the nickname The Killer. You can hear the pain in these tracks, the release of the killer within. It confronts you, you confront it, it’s ABSOLUTELY “like Merzbow and stuff.”